

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /031 R

DRAFTED BY INR/RES:JFHOSTIE

APPROVED BY INR/DRR:DEMARK

INR/DRR:MPACKMAN

S/S:DWMILLER

INR/RCRS:MTHORNE

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O 250057Z MAY 74 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

USINT DAMASCUS

S E C R E T STATE 110560

EXDIS TOSEC 1026

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: FR, PINT, PFOR

SUBJECT: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE

1. FOLLOWING IS INR ROUNDUP OF SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE DURING PAST MONTH WHICH YOU MAY FIND USEFUL AS BACKGROUND FOR YOUR POSSIBLE STOPOVER IN PARIS.

2. PRESIDENT-ELECT GISCARD D'ESTAING, WHO DEFEATED FRANCOIS MITTERRAND ON MAY 19, BY ONLY 50.8 TO 49.2 PERCENT, HAS STATED THAT HE WILL APPOINT HIS "SURPRISE CHOICE" AS PRIME MINISTER IMMEDIATELY AFTER INAUGURATION ON MAY 27. CHIRAC, GISCARD, FONTANET, AND JEAN SERISE, A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF GISCARD, HAVE ALL BEEN MENTIONED AS POSSIBILITIES. THE WHOLE CABINET, HE SAID, TO BE ANNOUNCED BY MAY 28, WILL REFLECT CHANGE AND YOUTH.

3. IN HIS EARLY ACTIONS, GISCARD CAN BE COUNTED ON TO MOVE PRUDENTLY, WITHOUT WRENCHING ESTABLISHED POLICY LINES AND POLITICAL PROCEDURES. HE IS INTERESTED IN IMPRESSING ON FRANCE HIS OWN NEW STYLE OF LEADERSHIP AND A MORE OPEN AND SECRET

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PRAGMATIC POLITICAL TONE, BUT HE KNOWS THAT THE GAULLISTS

ARE STILL THE DOMINANT PARTY IN THE LEGISLATURE, WITH WHICH HE MUST WORK OUT AN INITIAL PROGRAM.

4. DOMESTICALLY, GISCARD MAY SOON TRY TO DEVISE SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MEASURES WHICH MOLLIFY SOME OF THE

49 PERCENT OF FRENCHMEN WHO VOTED FOR MITTERRAND.

5. EMBASSY PARIS EXPECTS THAT GISCARD WILL BE MORE PRAGMATIC AND REALISTIC--AND CONCOMITANTLY LESS IDEOLOGICAL--IN HIS APPROACH TO US-FRENCH RELATIONS. "INDEPENDENCE" AND "PARTNERSHIP" SHOULD AGAIN BECOME MANAGEABLE WORDS RATHER THAN RALLYING CALLS. THE US SHOULD BE ABLE TO SOLVE THE MECHANICAL PROBLEMS OF CONSULTATION WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

6. GISCARD HAS PROMISED THAT A FIRST PRIORITY OF HIS ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE AN INITIATIVE TOWARD RESUMING THE DRIVE FOR EUROPEAN UNITY. THERE IS NO INDICATION, HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD BE ANY MORE WILLING THAN HIS PREDECESSORS TO ACCEPT THE DEGREE OF TRANSFER OF POLITICAL POWER OR NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY THAT MANY FEEL A EUROPEAN UNION WOULD REQUIRE.

7. GISCARD HAS STRESSED THAT THE FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP IS THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT OF EUROPEAN COOPERATION AND SECURITY. HE AND CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT, AN OLD FRIEND, CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THE CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WHICH THEY MAINTAINED AS FINANCE MINISTERS.

8. EMBASSY PARIS EXPECTS NO MAJOR CHANGE IN FRANCE'S POLICY AGAINST PARTICIPATION IN NATO INTEGRATED MILITARY ORGANIZATION, ALTHOUGH GISCARD MIGHT BE MORE ATTRACTED THAN HIS PREDECESSORS TO SOME FORM OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN THE EURO-GROUP IF THIS HELD OUT THE CHANCE OF RETURNING SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC GAIN TO FRANCE AND IF OTHER AVENUES TOWARD INCREASED EUROPEAN ARMAMENT COOPERATION SEEMED BLOCKED. GISCARD'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS SHOW A CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN DEFENSE STRUCTURE, ALTHOUGH HE RECOGNIZES THAT THIS MUST FOLLOW, NOT SECRET

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PRECEDE, EUROPEAN POLITICAL UNION. GISCARD HAS SAID THAT THE PRESENCE OF US TROOPS IN EUROPE IS NECESSARY TO THE SECURITY OF EUROPE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. GISCARD HAS STATED THAT HE WILL CONTINUE FRANCE'S DEVELOPMENT OF ITS NUCLEAR FORCES, INCLUDING NUCLEAR TESTING.

9. INR CONCURS IN THE EMBASSY'S VIEW THAT CONTINUITY OF FRENCH POLICY WILL GENERALLY PREVAIL IN INTERNATIONAL

AFFAIRS FOR THE INITIAL PERIOD OF THE GISCARD PRESIDENCY,
BUT IT WOULD NOT BE AT ALL SURPRISED TO SEE SIGNS EVEN IN
THE FIRST YEAR OF GREATER THAN EXPECTED EXPERIMENTATION
AND CHANGE, PARTICULARLY ON ISSUES INVOLVING WEST EURO-
PEAN PARTNERS, CERTAIN DEFENSE ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPE, AND
ACTIVITIES IN AN "ATLANTIC" CONTEXT. RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, ARMED FORCES, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, MINISTERIAL VISITS, POLITICAL PARTIES, TOSEC 1026, POLITICAL SITUATION, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, PRESIDENT ELECT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE110560
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JFHOSTIE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740131-0541
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740517/aaaaaofv.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 APR 2002 by garlanwa>; APPROVED <26 MAR 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, FR, US, EEC, (KISSINGER, HENRY A), (GISCARD D'ESTAING, VALERY)
To: JERUSALEM DAMASCUS
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005